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SAN DIEGO REGIONAL
WATER QUALITY
CONTROL BOARD

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OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Stephen C. Padilla

June 13, 2005

Chairman John Minan and Members of the Board
California Regional Water Quality Control Board, San Diego Region
9174 Skypark Court
San Diego, CA 92123-4340

RE: Support for protective cleanup standards for sediment remediation in San Diego Bay.

Dear Chairman and Regional Board Members:

San Diego Bay is an important economic and environmental resource for the San Diego region and especially for Chula Vista. It also provides for critical habitat for hundreds of species and, for many families, a source of food on the table.

The Regional Board will soon make a decision that may well determine how clean the Bay will ever be. Sediments play a significant role in the health of the marine ecosystem in the Bay by providing the habitat for aquatic life that lie at the base of the food chain upon which all others depend. The sediment in San Diego Bay are contaminated with levels of chemicals that threaten the health of the ecosystem and people who frequently eat fish from the Bay. Until these chemicals are removed, the Bay will never recover.

In a recent survey of 109 pier fishers in San Diego Bay conducted by Environmental Health Coalition 96% were from the Latino or Filipino communities and 83% lived in Barrio Logan, National City, and west Chula Vista. The survey results clearly demonstrate that a significant group of residents fish from the Bay, many frequently and who use the Bay as a source of food for their families. For example, of all the fisher surveyed 61% eat the fish they catch. Ninety-eight percent of Filipinos reported fishing weekly and 55% fishing every day.

While this community survey demonstrated that people are consuming fish from the bay, at least five other scientific health risk studies found that there are significant human health risks associated with frequent consumption of fish or of certain species of fish. This is a critical environmental justice issue for the South Bay community residents who are most impacted.

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I am especially concerned about the impacts to children's health as they are more at-risk from exposure to toxic chemicals. PCBs and mercury, both found in the sediments and the fish, are known to cause serious health and learning disabilities in children at low levels.

The protection of wildlife is also very important to residents of Chula Vista, as we have invested heavily in the creation of the Sweetwater and San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuges as environmental and economic assets. These are tremendous assets to our community and their health is directly related to the health of the Bay.

The Regional Water Quality Control Board will be establishing sediment cleanup levels for the Cleanup and Abatement Order for sediments in the leaseholds of the National Steel and Shipbuilding Company and Southwest Marine Shipyard. I strongly urge you to ensure that cleanup levels adopted are protective of the most sensitive users of San Diego Bay—the children our South Bay.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen C. Padilla", with a long horizontal line extending to the left.

Stephen C. Padilla
Mayor